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AFGHANISTAN

CASE STUDY

Afghan Farmers Adopt Greenhouse Techniques

Farmers in Herat increase income through USAID greenhouse project



Photo Credit: CRS/Afghanistan

In Herat Province, farmer Mola Shah Gool earned \$660 from his greenhouse last winter during a time period when he normally has no income.

“I plan to build more greenhouses,” says farmer Mola Shah Gool. “For a small cost, I can gain a good income, and they are easy to water from shallow wells, common in this dry area.”

Challenge Most farmers in Afghanistan make little or no income during the winter months. Furthermore, the high start-up costs for cold storage to boost farmer income is not feasible for the average small and medium-scale farmer in Afghanistan. In Herat province, the approximately 1.5 million inhabitants must consume imported fresh fruit and vegetables from Iran or

Pakistan at high prices during the winter. Afghan farmers do not possess the greenhouse technology that is necessary to grow late-season or off-season fruits and vegetables to meet this large demand.

Initiative USAID and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) worked together to promote a greenhouse technology demonstration project in Herat Province. Greenhouse cultivation has four distinct strategic advantages: off-season income, import substitution, low start-up costs, and sustainability. Greenhouses provide income to farmers during the winter months when they normally cannot grow crops and therefore have no income at all. Low start-up costs allow small and medium-

scale farmers to adopt the technology, and high rates of return ensure sustainability.

Results Eighty-one greenhouses were constructed in three districts of Herat over the past two years. Lead farmers were appointed to test greenhouses and train other farmers in their communities. Farmers participating in the greenhouse demonstration project nearly doubled their annual incomes and enthusiastically shared their results with non-participating farmers. The success of the greenhouse project and the word-of-mouth endorsements by participants has led over 100 farmers to seek loans to finance their own greenhouse construction. Greenhouse promotion is an example of how USAID funds can be used in an efficient manner to increase farmer income in Afghanistan and scale up successful demonstration projects.